

February 17, 2006

USAID/CAR Bi-weekly Report

Kazakhstan

USAID Opens Regional HIV/AIDS Prevention Training Center

On February 7, 2006, USAID's Health Partnerships Project opened the Regional Training Center for the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS (PMTCT) at the Temirtau City Maternity House. As Kazakhstan works to control the emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic, preventing mother-to-child transmission of the virus has emerged as a key element of a comprehensive strategy to combat HIV/AIDS in the region. The new training center will conduct both knowledge-based and clinical-based PMTCT training and serve as the center of PMTCT excellence and a model for replication in the region. The center will utilize the skills and experience of national trainers from Almaty, Karaganda, Pavlodar, and Temirtau who participated in USAID-sponsored PMTCT trainings in Kiev, Odessa, and St. Petersburg. USAID's project equipped the center with computers, office equipment, and training aids.

The USAID Health Partnerships Project is implemented by the American International Health Alliance (AIHA). It closely cooperates with the Kazakh Ministry of Health, national and oblast AIDS centers, and the Karaganda Oblast Health Administration. Additionally, USAID's project is working closely with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, and other organizations to adapt international guidelines, training programs, and related evidence-based strategies and standards for use in Kazakhstan.

Kyrgyz Republic

USAID Provides Support to Non-Governmental Media Outlets

Six regional media outlets increased their revenues from advertising by up to 400%, sales of issues by 8% to 20%, and staff salaries by 5% to 50% as a result of a one-year USAID project, implemented by the Eurasia Foundation and Internews. The project's goal was to create successful models for media management and to improve the financial sustainability of independent media. Six regional media outlets (including two TV and two radio stations, and two newspapers) and six Kyrgyz journalists were chosen to participate in the project by a panel of independent experts, including representatives of international organizations, in January 2005. Throughout 2005 the six journalists, together with media managers from the pilot media outlets, received training from Russian media specialists in Bishkek, Moscow, and Vologda. The participants also received a manual "Media Management: Practical Aspects of Managing Small Enterprises," published in both Russian and Kyrgyz.



On January 14, 2006, the results of USAID's project were presented to the media and public.

Photo: Eurasia Foundation



New Handbook Educates Kyrgyz about Different Electoral Systems

As the Kyrgyz Republic is preparing for a nationwide referendum on which form of government it will adopt, the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) on January 10, 2006 presented a newly published Russian language publication "Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook." The handbook, published by IFES with funds from USAID and the U.S. Department of State, outlines all main electoral systems used in various countries and provides examples of electoral reform from around the world. The first printing of the handbook will be distributed to members of parliament, the presidential and prime minister's administrations, NGOs, political parties, university libraries, and the media. It will provide a useful tool for all stakeholders in the ongoing debate on this crucial subject.



IFES Election Consultant Dan Malinovich discusses the publication with the author of the handbook's translation, an Associate Professor at the American University of Central Asia, Gulnara Iskakova.

Photo: IFES

New Program Improves Transparency in Higher Education in the Kyrgyz Republic

The Eurasia Foundation launched a new program, Transparency in Higher Education in the Kyrgyz Republic, on February 9, 2006. Financed by USAID, the program will develop a pilot rating system for seven Kyrgyz universities. The system will serve as a unified method for increasing the quality and transparency of higher education in the country. It will also give current and prospective students access to objective and independent information about the academic reputation of a university, its curriculum, and career opportunities for its graduates. The program will be piloted at the American University of Central Asia, Bishkek Financial-Economic Academy, Kyrgyz State Law Academy, Kyrgyz Technical University, Kyrgyz National University, Naryn State University, and Osh State University. In addition to developing the rating system, the program will work to establish and strengthen the Board of Trustees and will support the development of career service centers at pilot universities.

Tajikistan

Independent Tajikistani TV Stations Achieve Another Milestone

Eight independent regional TV stations have recently assumed production of a Tajik-language weekly news program. Since 2001, the news program, based on information and inputs from independent TV stations, had been produced and distributed by Internews through USAID's Media and Information Support Initiative. During that time, the USAID project provided the stations with equipment and extensive training to develop their capacity to produce quality news coverage. The program, *Pavaind* (Connection), will now be produced by the stations themselves on a quarterly rotating basis. Internews will continue providing technical guidance and the necessary equipment until the stations are fully capable of producing the program themselves. As of January 31, 2006, three editions of *Paivand* have been prepared and broadcasted by the local stations.



USAID provides training, equipment, and funding to support the development of independent media in Tajikistan.

Photo: USAID





Tajikistan's emerging independent media is facing a number of challenges, including lack of funding and equipment, and tight government control. USAID assists the development of independent TV and radio stations through funding of original programming by local stations, and production of information and news programs, to support the availability of timely and broad-based information in the country.

USAID-Supported NGO Leads Campaign against Corruption

A number of newspapers and TV and radio stations in Tajikistan resolved to continue addressing corruption after participating in a discussion led by the Shahrvand Civil Society Support Center (CCSC). This USAID-supported NGO recently gathered representatives of the Hukumat (city council), press, and political parties to discuss opportunities to counteract corruption in the country. Despite the fact that the majority of Tajikistan's population is opposed to corruption and especially corruption in the form of bribes, there is still a certain amount of passivity and indifference which allows corrupt practices to continue. The government publicly states its intent to fight corruption, yet, at the same time, the population is afraid to speak openly about corruption in government agencies. Participants of the CCSC's roundtable concluded that to successfully fight corruption, it is important to mobilize a broad section of society and engage the press. The roundtable was widely covered by local media.

The CCSC is funded through a grant from the USAID Civil Society Support Program, implemented by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). The recent roundtable was part of a corruption-awareness campaign coordinated by the CCSC.

Tajikistan Reduces Registration Fees for NGOs

Thanks to the efforts of the International Center for Non-profit Law (ICNL), registration fees for Tajik NGOs have been substantially reduced by the amendments to the Law on State Fees which were adopted on December 26, 2005. The high cost for NGO registration has been a significant impediment to the growth of NGOs in Tajikistan. With support from USAID's Civic Society Project, ICNL has been addressing the issue by providing technical expertise on the laws on State Registration of Legal Entities, Charitable Activity, and State Fees.

This is the third reduction in NGO registration fees achieved through continuous ICNL advocacy efforts since 2001. Since this time, the number of registered NGOs, especially in the rural areas of the country, has increased significantly.

USAID Assists the Government of Tajikistan in Drafting Laws and Regulations

USAID projects have recently helped finalize two draft laws that will improve Tajikistan's public administration system and facilitate the development of the private sector. USAID's Commercial Legislation Development Project, implemented by ARD/Checchi, was instrumental in preparing a new Administrative Procedure Code. On January 30, 2006, this new code was signed by the President of Tajikistan and sent to Parliament. The code establishes the country's first-ever set of procedural rules for government agencies, and, when adopted, will create the foundation for a more transparent and stronger public administration system in Tajikistan.

Meanwhile, the Trade Facilitation Project, implemented by Pragma, assisted in finalizing the draft law on technical regulations. Currently, Tajikistan's standards and certification system is still run according to the Soviet model, which was designed for a planned economic system. Therefore, overly burdensome standards have become a major obstacle to free trade and growth of small and medium businesses in Tajikistan. Adoption of the new law on technical regulations will bring Tajikistan's standards and certification system into compliance with the WTO accession requirements, and will create fairer technical regulation systems to facilitate international trade while protecting citizens' interests.

